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ASML apparently beats Nikon for UMC's huge 300-mm scanner order

By **EE|Times** [< https://www.eetimes.com/author/eetimes/>](https://www.eetimes.com/author/eetimes/) 10.23.2000 0

HSINCHU, Taiwan — In another major win in the silicon-foundry equipment arena, ASM Lithography of the Netherlands has reportedly beaten Nikon Corp. of Japan for a 300-mm step-and-scan tool order worth up to \$360 million at United Microelectronics Corp., according to sources here.

But sources also believe that both Nikon and Japan's Canon Inc. have also received a substantial amount of lithography business in the recent round of competition at UMC, the world's second largest silicon foundry provider. Leading lithography vendors have been scrambling for UMC's new business and for good reason. As reported last month (see **Sept. 24 story** [< http://www.semibiznews.com/story/OEG20000921S0024>](http://www.semibiznews.com/story/OEG20000921S0024)), ASML and Nikon were the two leading scanner vendors competing for a massive order to equip UMC's new 300-mm wafer fab in Tainan. UMC's 300-mm plant, called Fab 12A, is currently being built, with plans to bring the facility into production by mid-2001.

According to reliable industry sources, UMC has reportedly given the entire 300-mm lithography order to AMSL. Initially, UMC could purchase up to 10 of ASML's TwinScan line of 300-mm scanners for its 300-mm (12-inch) wafer fab, but the order could go as high as 30 systems, they added. The exposure tools sell for about \$10 million to \$12 million each.

UMC also evaluated Nikon's NSR-S203B/S103B line of 300-mm systems for the order, according to sources. But instead, in the 300-mm fab, the Taiwan company has decided to procure an undisclosed amount of lithography systems based on i-line optical technology from Nikon, they added.

ASML's TwinScan tools will handle the bulk of the 300-mm wafer exposure tasks inside UMC's Fab12A, while Nikon's i-line platforms will support non-critical layers in foundry-chip production, the sources said.

In UMC's other 300-mm fab activities—the joint venture with Hitachi Ltd. in Japan, called Trecenti Technologies Inc.—Canon has received a giant order for 300-mm exposure tools. That deal is worth about \$360 million, according to sources in Taiwan.

ASML company officials declined to comment on the 300-mm lithography order. Nikon officials in the United States did not return phone calls late on Friday, while Canon and UMC managers could not be reached for comment.


The lithography order at UMC is a major boost for ASML, the world's second-largest supplier of these critical tools, next to Nikon. ASML claims that it will become the world's largest lithography supplier once it completes purchase of San Jose-based Silicon Valley Group Inc. (see **Oct. 2 story** [< http://www.semibiznews.com/story/OEG20001002S0010>](http://www.semibiznews.com/story/OEG20001002S0010)). The UMC order will give ASML the lion's share of the 300-mm lithography business among Taiwan's foundry players, including its ongoing business with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (TSMC)—the world's largest pure-play foundry supplier.


For years, TSMC has primarily procured steppers from ASML, due in part to the company's connection with Royal Philips Electronics N.V. of Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Philips still owns a 26% stake in TSMC, while the Dutch-based electronics giant has also has close, historical ties to ASML as well.


Like UMC, rival TSMC plans to use ASML's TwinScan line of scanners in its 300-mm production lines. TSMC is expected to begin producing the first 300-mm wafers in a pilot line, located in Fab 6 in Tainan, by year's end. On the other hand, UMC tends to use a "mix-and-match" approach, in terms of its 300-mm lithography strategy. For years, UMC has used wafer steppers from both Nikon and ASML in its 200-mm (8-inch) fabs in Taiwan.

—Mark LaPedus reporting from Silicon Valley in the U.S.

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